

## LEARNING TO SEE CROOKED

"mommie," she says, "i've never seen you and daddy kiss."

"Of course you have," the mother says;  
"you've just forgotten."

"i wouldn't have forgotten that," she says,  
"because i always wish you would."

"it doesn't matter," her father says. "we  
both love you and we love each other in our  
own way."

"you've seen us kiss," the mother says.

"not on the mouth. not the way people  
kiss on your soap operas."

"your mother and i have been together  
nearly twenty years," her father says.  
"we did a lot of kissing in our time.  
that's why we have you and your brother,  
thank god."

"maybe you did, but you don't now,"  
their daughter says.

the father says, "your mother and i sleep  
in the same bed. we do our best to get along  
and we have our love for you and your brother  
in common. there are things we have come to  
understand that you will someday also understand."

this almost satisfies her, but she adds,  
"i think you wish that mommie still kissed you."

the mother says, "if you're finished eating,  
you may leave the table."

## MORE STATELY TOWNHOUSES

chekhov said, "only the rich fear death."

but he hadn't met  
the american middle-class.